

International Giving 2018

Seekers Church continues to support many missions and ministries in the United States and other countries. Once again, this year the amount budgeted for international giving is almost 20% of what we expect to receive in offerings over the course of the year.

Once our overall budget for the year was approved, and the overall amount available for international giving had been determined by the Stewards of Seekers Church, all Seekers were invited to request support for missions or ministries where they are personally involved. After worship on February 18th the community met to determine how our international giving will be distributed. At that community meeting we affirmed support for 12 international missions and ministries:

Middle East

[New Story Leadership – Israel/Palestine](#)

[Rhiza Collective Documentary Film – Israel/Palestine](#)

Africa

[Bokamoso Youth Foundation – South Africa](#)

[Othandweni Day Care and Guest House – South Africa](#)

[Volta Region Early Childhood Education Outreach Program – Ghana](#)

[Programme Nutrition & Eye Care \(PRONEC\) – Uganda](#)

Central America

[PAVA \(Programa de Ayuda a los Vecinos del Altiplano\) – Guatemala](#)

[Collegio Miguel Angel Asturias – Guatemala](#)

[San Lucas Toliman Reforestation Project – Guatemala](#)

[Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods \(SOIL\) – Haiti](#)

[El Mundo para Puerto Morelos – Mexico](#)

[Center for Development in Central America \(CDCA\) – Nicaragua](#)

Here are the international missions and ministries we are supporting this year. To visit their web sites, click on the name of the organization.

MIDDLE EAST

[New Story Leadership – Israel/Palestine](#)

New Story Leadership seeks to inspire a new story of possibility for the Middle East by bringing outstanding Israeli and Palestinian students to Washington DC to experience American culture, history and democracy. Through living, learning, and working together, these future leaders come to respect difference, not to fear it, and to view the conflict with new eyes. Before, during and after the program, NSL strives to support all its graduates as they return home with a new hope about building a better future together.

Seekers Church is pleased to be hosting the US office of New Story Leadership in our facility.

This year our support will help NSL transform from a start-up organization with a board of directors that acts mainly as an operating committee to a more mature organization with a governing board that will help set ambitious goals and deliverables on the long journey to bring a just peace to Israel and Palestine. The organization is at a crucial turning point at a time when the Israeli/Palestinian conflict seems more intractable than ever. Pat Conover, Billy Amoss and other members of Seekers and the Eyes to See Ears to Hear Peace Prayer Mission Group maintain an active partnership with NSL, particularly during their annual visit to Washington D.C.

Rhiza Collective Documentary Film – Israel/Palestine

Rhiza is a women-led collective that uses storytelling, healing, organizing, and research to support social transformation and environmental justice. This contribution will support preproduction and story development work for a documentary film about Palestinians who are creating a new, life-affirming story in villages in the Palestinian West Bank. The story is new because it is not centered on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and shows Palestinians in a dramatically different light from the images created by the prevailing mainstream narrative, which focuses almost exclusively on the conflict in the region.

The funding will allow the film's director, Maggie Lemere, to hire an Arabic-speaking individual to transcribe, translate, and organize many hours of interviews (more than anticipated) with Palestinian olive farmers and their families conducted on location by the film crew. The film crew is not drawing a salary for their work. By the end of May there should be a trailer of the film, a selection of quite stunning photos, and a complete treatment of the full-length film.

Rhiza intends to offer a presentation to the Seekers Community as an expression of their gratitude to Seekers for making the film project possible. Billy Amoss, who is a co-producer of the film, provides close contact for Seekers Church.

AFRICA

Bokamoso Youth Foundation – Winterveldt, Gauteng, South Africa

The Bokamoso Youth Foundation supports the Bokamoso Youth Centre, in Winterveldt, South Africa. Bokamoso seeks to empower at-risk youth through life and work skills training,

professional counseling, and administration of scholarships for further education that are funded by the Bokamoso Youth Foundation. The Bokamoso (the Tswana word for “future”) program has been offering hope and a future to the youth of Winterveldt since 1999.

Seekers supports the Centre through participation on the board of the Bokamoso Youth Foundation (USA), supporting an annual exchange program that brings twelve young people from Winterveldt to share their life stories through poetry, songs and theatrical performances with people in the US. The intent is to raise awareness of the challenges young people face in Winterveldt, South Africa, and to widen the circle of support for the youth of the Bokamoso Youth Centre.

Seekers Church has had a connection with Bokamoso that goes back many years. The Foundation grew out of a decade of support within Seekers for the emerging partnership with Bokamoso, and many of us are actively involved with Bokamoso. During the annual visit from Bokamoso, Seekers Church sponsors a career workshop, to help Bokamoso members plan for future employment, and to support Bokamoso staff as they plan for the long-term viability of their program. Roy Barber and Elese Sizemore have been central links in the long-term relationship and serve on the board of directors of the Bokamoso Youth Foundation.

Othandweni Day Care and Guest House – South Africa

Winterveldt is an impoverished, crime -ridden township in a former Bantustan about an hour’s drive north of Pretoria. Seekers’ link to Othandweni began in 2002, with an invitation to help with the Center’s construction, and with the training of the Team to run what was then a guest house, designed to welcome visitors to the Bokamoso Life Centre and associated missions next door.

In 2005, the Team added a Day-Care operation for preschoolers to learn the basics and prepare them for first grade, also enabling the parents to go to work. Since the hiring of Level 4 teachers, the Center has improved tremendously.

Later, as a service to the community, they started an After-School Program for about fifty middle level students, providing an oasis of hope for youth who otherwise would be running loose in a dangerous area. Here they can find a place to get help with homework, learn traditional song and dance, have a decent meal (in some cases the only one for the day), and share their aspirations in a supportive environment.

In addition to financial aid, Seekers has given time and technical assistance. In 2011, the Friends of Othandweni was formed to give more consistent support, with the goal that the Center would eventually become self-sustaining within South Africa's governmental and social structures. Through a private donor, the Center has most recently hired a consultant to upgrade the organization and meet the policy requirements for local nonprofits. She has proved herself very capable, and the goal is to raise enough funds to retain her as Director. At Seekers Church Linda Nunes-Schrag and Bill Drehmann maintain regular mentoring and fundraising contact with Othandweni, through e-mail and phone, and striving to raise needed funds. They welcome anyone who feels moved to join them.

Volta Region Early Childhood Education Outreach Program – Ghana

In collaboration with students and faculty at Ashesi University in Accra, Ghana the team is working to provide curriculum, resources, and training to emerging pre-primary early childhood education centers in the rural Volta region, a rural area in the eastern part of Ghana surrounding Lake Volta. Collaborating with "model" preprimary education programs in Accra, the team aims to fill the gap between the

urban and rural education opportunities. The team is made up of two faculty members, three faculty interns, and two students. The project, which began in November, is scheduled to be completed by May with the potential of extending it another year. The training will take place at Ashesi University and will be conducted by professionals in the field of early childhood development.

The team will observe “model” preprimary education programs [children between the ages of 1-5] before going to the Volta to conduct needs assessments at each participating school. After observing and speaking extensively with staff, faculty, parents, and children, the team will then research and plan to adapt culturally relevant curricula and develop a training seminar for preprimary staff, expand the available curriculum, and provide each school with educational materials and activities. Initial funding from the Ford Foundation has supported training and educational resources for two emerging early childhood education centers. With additional funding, the team hopes to expand outreach to three centers, including additional staff and faculty in its summer training session at Ashesi. Caren Holmes is serving as a member of this team.

Programme Nutrition & Eye Care (PRONEC) – Uganda

Pronec-Uganda is a Non-Governmental Organization involved in eye care, dental services, and nutrition education to poor communities in the Jinja district. It intends to use funds from Seekers to correct visual impairment and treat eye related diseases including cataracts, river blindness, and glaucoma.

PRONEC rose out of the gap for lack of optical, dental, nutritional services in the health facilities of surrounding areas and communities. Private clinics were and are still too expensive for ordinary people to afford. Eye care, dental

services, and nutrition education are not addressed as a priority in the formal health settings provided for the public such as hospitals and government clinics. This lack of resources predominantly affects poor people, who cannot afford to travel to the town centers in order to access the services they require. PRONEC provides:

- Vision exams and eyesight tests
- Affordable optical services
- Outreach screening for eye defects
- Nutrition Education
- HIV/AIDS education and services

David Dongo & Damalie Mirembe maintain our connection with PRONEC.

CENTRAL AMERICA

[PAVA \(Programa de Ayuda a los Vecinos del Altiplano\)](#) – Chimaltenango, Guatemala

PAVA (Aid Program for Highland Communities) is a Guatemalan non-governmental organization (NGO) that works closely with rural communities in the Department of Chimaltenango, Guatemala to achieve long-term sustainable development through community-based projects and programs. A small, full-time staff based in Antigua manages PAVA's programs, providing technical expertise and coordination for community learning centers (comunitecas) that serve as libraries and learning centers in three model highland communities, scholarship programs which allow rural Guatemalan children to finish high school, and a professional development program for teachers to improve the quality of education in primary schools.

From 2002 through 2015 Seekers Church supported an annual work pilgrimage Led by Marjory and Peter Bankson, to help sustain the work of PAVA, raising funds and organizing groups of about

two dozen people from Seekers Church and across the United States to work with PAVA and residents of 15 different villages. During this time, we helped construct 11 schoolhouses, three libraries and two running water systems.

This year's contribution will support the PAVA scholarship program, part of the current PAVA focus on educational support for graduates of village middle schools. programs. Since 1986 PAVA has been highly committed to supporting the education of children in remote highland communities. The main objective is to help close the breach in rural children's enrollment in middle school. The Banksons maintain the link between PAVA and Seekers Church.

Collegio Miguel Angel Asturias – **Quetzaltenango, Guatemala**

Miguel Angel Asturias Academy is a private, non-profit Pre K-12 school in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, founded in 1994 to eliminate education disparities and create informed, critical-thinking, socially conscious citizens in Guatemala through subsidized tuition to its creative curriculum. This curriculum is based on the popular education theory of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, in which systems of injustice are confronted and transformed on the basis of all as teachers and learners. The Academy has two main missions: get ALL Guatemalan children in school and break cycles of poverty through education.

Asturias Academy currently serves approximately 300 students from varying backgrounds: indigenous, non-indigenous, poor, working class and middle class. Many Seekers have visited the Asturias Academy and we welcomed the founder to Washington DC on a visit several years ago. Marjory and Peter Bankson support our contact with the Asturias Academy.

San Lucas Toliman Reforestation Project – Solola, Guatemala

From 2002 through 2015, the Guatemala Pilgrimages led by Marjory and Peter Bankson offered participating pilgrims the opportunity to visit several of the missions and ministries that emerged in San Lucas Toliman while Father Greg Schaffer served as priest at the Catholic Church there. The Reforestation Project, founded and run by Toribio Chajil is one of these ministries. After Fr. Greg passed away in May 2012, the Friends of San Lucas (FOSL) took over management of the Mission but had to cut its budget to the core programs of education, construction, health, coffee cooperative, and visitors. FOSL was able to give Toribio use of the land at a nominal rent, to continue his reforestation program.

Toribio provides seedlings, insight and encouragement to people around Guatemala to help control erosion and encourage environmental sensitivity. Toribio's daughter, who lives in Oregon and has been helping with our connection to Toribio, sent the following summary of what her father has been able to do:

During these 6 months, the project has been able to cover some expenses and to carry out some activities with young people and children of the town. And we have been able to give in some schools talks about environmental education. That makes us feel great satisfaction because we continue working to be able to help our Mother Earth. Your support has been an important pillar.

The Banksons maintain our link with the Reforestation Project. In 2017 Seekers Church was joined by 8th Day, another Church of the Saviour faith community to support this work.

Sustainable Organic Integrated

Livelihoods (SOIL) – Haiti

Since 2006, SOIL has been transforming wastes into resources in Haiti. Through the use of ecological sanitation, SOIL is working to create a revolutionary social business model for providing access to safe, dignified sanitation that produces rich, organic compost as a natural resource for Haiti's badly-depleted soils, while also creating economic opportunities in some of the world's most under-resourced communities. Erica Lloyd, who grew up in Seekers Church and maintains active connections, serves on the SOIL staff.

Currently, only 10% of rural Haitians and less than 25% of those in cities have access to adequate sanitation facilities, by far the lowest coverage in the Western Hemisphere. People are forced to find other ways to dispose of their wastes, often in the ocean, rivers, ravines, plastic bags, or abandoned houses. At the same time, agricultural output is low due to poor soil fertility, soil erosion and lack of fertilizers.

Ecological sanitation (EcoSan) is a low-cost approach to sanitation where human wastes are collected, composted and recycled for use in agriculture and reforestation. It simultaneously addresses many of Haiti's most pressing issues: improving public health, increasing agricultural productivity, mitigating environmental degradation, and providing low-cost sanitation.

SOIL depends on contributions from groups like Seekers Church to keep projects going strong through the ups and downs of grant cycles and to quickly respond to changing conditions on the ground in the communities it serves. With support from Seekers Church SOIL will construct and operationalize a new compost site on private land that will treat and transform human wastes. SOIL has already secured co-funding from the Open Road Alliance that is earmarked for waste treatment infrastructure, and will work to find any additional co-

funding necessary to match Seeker's contribution.

[El Mundo para Puerto Morelos](#) – Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo, Mexico

Puerto Morelos is located on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and is a small seaport with luxury condos and houses along the beach. However, just five minutes from this lovely seaside town's center in a section know as Colonia, a large percent of the people live in poverty with their children suffering from malnutrition and related ailments. There are parents unable to send their children to school for lack of a few dollars as well as families of nine living in single rooms with leaking roofs, and sub-standard sanitation. The Colonia area has under-supplied/under-staffed medical clinics, and ill-equipped emergency responders unable to do the jobs they are trained to do.

El Mundo para Puerto Morelos was started in 2005 with numerous projects—many around schools, child welfare, and health care issues—all projects to improve the lives of those living in Puerto Morelos and particularly, the Colonia area. Through research and open communication, volunteers determine needs that are not being met through normal bureaucratic channels, work with community leaders to identify solutions to meet those needs, and then focus on the steps necessary to implement plans for solving the issues. Recently, the community has created a technical high school for youth who are 17 + years old situated in this section of Puerto Morelos that has great poverty. This high school/technical school, called Bacchlere, trains young people in core subjects, including English which they can use in the hotel industry.

Doug and Joan Dodge have visited Puerto Morelos for the past four years and have been begun volunteering their support. In 2018, Sharon and David Lloyd visited the technical high school together to see the efforts of the school and their impact on

lives of the young students

Center for Development in Central America (CDCA) – Nicaragua

CDCA is an intentional community who is part of the non-profit organization “Jubilee House Community”. Based in the west of Managua, CDCA mission is to enable communities to become self-sufficient, sustainable, democratic entities by working in four areas: sustainable agriculture, economic development, health care, and education.

This request will support a project on education and healthier lives led by Rebecca Wheaton, a volunteer in CDCA who is also a massage therapist, yoga instructor and director of Power Brain Education (PBE). The project will bring PBE into schools and communities where CDCA operates, hosting trainings, purchasing teaching materials, completing the translation of all PBE materials into Spanish and more.

Oswaldo Montoya and Rosa Campos have contributed to the PBE project as donors and supporters of its founder Rebecca Wheaton. They have a long-standing relationship with Rebecca when the three of them were members of the Cooperative “Tininiska” (an alternative health center in Managua). Rebecca, who was a child raised in Takoma Park (MD), says that

“PBE is an innovative education experience that helps to improve one’s physical, emotional and cognitive capacity by combining neuroscience findings with mind-body techniques that improve focus, concentration and emotional wellbeing. PBE equips teachers, parents, students and administrators with vital tools that create a more harmonious environment in the classroom, at home and, most importantly, within the hearts and minds of those who practice...There are three different organizations I work with on a volunteer basis offering therapy sessions and professional development trainings, primarily benefiting teachers and community

leaders as well as staff members under extreme pressure. Therapy sessions also benefit family members struggling with communication difficulties by modeling and practicing team building exercises, interactive games and deep breathing and relaxation techniques. The program is also integrated into an after-school boys group for twenty-three boys ages 8-15.”

PBE is looking to train many more teachers and mentors in this educational modality both in schools and through on-going trainings at our base center Alma Yoga, located in Managua. The most important point in all of this work is this: Power Brain Education is striving to encourage and educate people to seek deeper into what their infinite potential feels like.